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# Congressional SALT monitoring role sought

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Washington—Representative Les Aspin (D., Wis.), chairman of a House intelligence panel, announced yesterday he will introduce legislation to involve Congress directly in verifying Soviet compliance with the terms of strategic arms limitation agreements.

Congress now gets after-the-fact reports on possible violations and how they are disposed of, but Mr. Aspin argued that is too late.

The substance of issues dealing with possible cheating, he said, is now handled only by the executive branch. Congressional participation, particularly including the minority political party, is necessary to give the verification process credibility and insure it is not being tampered with for political purposes, he said.

Mr. Aspin's proposed legislation, which also would cover all other arms control pacts involving the United States, would require the executive branch to keep Congress currently informed whenever a suspected violation is being investigated. Lawmakers would receive in timely manner data on "all developments in the compliance area".

The congressman is chairman of the House Intelligence Committee's oversight subcommittee and based his proposals on a study of potential congressional treaty verification powers by the research service of the Library of Congress.

The issue Mr. Aspin wants Congress to be directly involved in has proved one of the most contentious under the existing SALT agreements and it promises to be no less so under the more complex SALT II treaty now pending in the Senate.

Melvin R. Laird, defense secretary in the Nixon administration; Senator Jake Garn (R., Utah), a strong SALT critic, and many others have alleged numerous violations by the Russians of the 1972 agreements.

In reports to Congress, the executive branch has told how such issues were handled in the U.S.-Soviet Standing Consultative Commission, set up to consider disputes, and generally has exonerated Moscow of violation claims.

The procedure is so secret, however, that it fails to settle issues as far as the interested public is concerned.

Congress is not told when a possible violation is under investigation, Mr. Aspin said, and this results in a "field day for rumormongers." First, evidence of a violation is leaked, and then a counter-leak offers "proof" that nothing happened.

"The end result is to discredit the whole verification process," Mr. Aspin contended.

The Congressional Research Service report to Mr. Aspin noted that the treaty compliance issue involves not only the degree to which agreements are observed but also the way the executive branch resolves controversies. The latter can involve "significant policy decisions." Congress now has a limited role in all this, it was noted.

In 1976, the Senate Select Intelligence Committee said the record indicated that Henry A. Kissinger, then secretary of state, "has attempted to control the dissemination and analysis of data on apparent Soviet violations of the SALT pact." The Central Intelligence Agency was told, the committee said, that it should avoid written judgments on Soviet compliance, that such judgments would be made by the National Security Council.

There is a similar issue today, over whether the CIA should go beyond monitoring the agreement and have any opinion of its own on whether terms had been violated. Judgments at higher levels, as the Congressional Research Service suggested, involve political considerations on the state of relations with Moscow as well as factual issues.